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Editor & Production Coordinator

Joyce Reddoch

Associate Editors

Bill Gummer Peter Hall

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Jim Montgomery

Graphics

Marc Guertin

Production Staff

Telephone Coordinator

Dorothy Greene

Proofreaders

Eileen Evans

Judy Hall

Allan Reddoch

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Elisabeth Thomson

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The Ottawa Field ~ Naturalists' Club

— Founded 1879 —

President

W.K. (Bill) Gummer

Objectives of the Club: To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and publish the results of research in all fields of natural history and to diffuse information on these fields as widely as possible; to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things.

Club Publications: THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST, a quarterly devoted to reporting research in all fields of natural history relevant to Canada; TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, providing articles on the natural history of the Ottawa Valley and on local Club activities five times a year; and THE SHRIKE, a bimonthly newsletter on birdwatching in the Ottawa-Hull area, available by separate subscription.

Field Trips, Lectures and other natural history activities are arranged for local members; see "Coming Events" in this issue.

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Membership application, correspondence:

THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB

Box 3264, Postal Station C

Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4J5

Information:

(613) 722-3050

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Editorial Address:
Joyce M. Reddoch, Editor
548 Rivershore Crescent
Gloucester, Ontario K1J 7Y7

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Council Report

Bill Gummer

The 107th Annual Business Meeting

On the night of January 14, 1986, about 55 members braved the cold to attend the Annual Business Meeting. President Frank Pope called the meeting to order and, in the usual pattern, the minutes of the 1985 meeting and the reports of committees were read and accepted.

The Club is in good shape financially, with no need to consider any changes such as a fee increase. Excess of income over expenditure was more than \$10,000, including production of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*. The new Finance Committee will review its *modus operandi* and a number of existing issues.

In addition to presentation of all OFNC awards except the Anne Hanes Natural History Award for the year 1984, the Awards Committee was able to report on two successful nominations for "outside awards", the first time this has been done. The passing of Dr. Bernard Boivin, a 1983 Honorary Member, was noted.

Major accomplishments of the Birds Committee were completion of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project for the Ottawa Region, plus considerable extra work on parts of neighbouring areas; a new birder's checklist for the Ottawa District was published; and a bird hotline was inaugurated.

The Conservation Committee's report emphasized the Club's broad involvement in local, provincial and national issues. Included were the fight over development of part of the Carp Hills, studies of Marlborough Forest and its sensitive areas, investigations of regional waste management problems and solutions, further efforts to preserve Alfred Bog including a joint meeting with Wildlife Habitat Canada and a number of other organizations with similar interests, and support in principle for efforts to preserve South Moresby Island. In regard to the waste management program, a brief prepared by the Committee was presented on environmental quality importance.

The Education and Publicity Committee reviewed its activities of recruiting leaders for outside groups, for both walks and talks. Text was prepared to accompany the 50 bird slides purchased from Cornell University and used in schools and elsewhere in Ottawa.

The Excursions and Lectures Committee reported on 54 excursions (24 relating to birds and seven to botany) and 10 monthly meetings. The Annual Soirée in April became a successful pot-luck supper followed by presentation of awards, Macoun reports, and prizes for Macouner exhibits. Jointly with the Membership Committee, the Committee organized the first New Members' Night in November, with "wine and cheese" and discussion on the Club's activities by and with the Councillors and some of the Honorary Members. Deemed a success, a repeat is planned for 1986. Total Club membership as of December 1985 was 1211, a drop of 22 from last year's figure.

The Macoun Field Club Committee was able to report on a successful year, after some concern about a shortage in supervision and expertise. Field trips focussed on the Macoun Study Area south of Bell's Corners, but it is planned to broaden these trips to include other areas in the region. Liaison between the Macoun Field Club and other OFNC committees is being improved so that all are aware of the program and can offer to help with leaders or expertise.

The Publications Committee also made a generally optimistic report. *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* is in good shape, although the publishing schedule slipped a bit; Number 3 of Volume 99 was the largest single issue in the history of the journal. *Trail & Landscape* maintained its standards, and a 20-year index is in preparation. *The Shrike* unfortunately encountered difficulties in meeting schedules, and is seeking means of recovering its position.

The Nominations Committee proposed and the meeting accepted the following slate of officers and Council members:

Past President	Frank Pope
President	Bill Gummer (596-1148)
Vice-Presidents	Barbara Campbell (839-3418)
	Jeff Harrison (230-5968)
Recording Secretary	Eleanor Bottomley (225-0348)
Corresponding Secretary	Barbara Martin (233-0447)
Treasurer	Paul Ward (722-1203)

Council	<u>Ross Anderson</u>	<u>Don Fillman</u>
	<u>Ron Bedford</u>	<u>Fern Levine</u>
	<u>Dan Brunton</u>	<u>Lynda Maltby</u>
	<u>Allan Cameron</u>	<u>Bob Milko</u>
	<u>Bill Cody</u>	<u>Joyce Reddoch</u>
	<u>Francis Cook</u>	<u>Roger Taylor</u>
	<u>Ellaine Dickson</u>	<u>Diana Thompson</u>
	<u>Eileen Evans</u>	



The Conservation Committee meeting in January 1985. From left to right are Barbara Martin, Roger Taylor, Ewen Todd, Caroline Harris (Secretary), Lynda Maltby (Chairman), Stew Hamill, Joyce Reddoch and Don Cuddy. Photograph from a slide by Charlie Beddoe.

Outgoing President, Frank Pope, expressed his pleasure with his term of office and his thanks to all his colleagues. New President, Bill Gummer, referred briefly to some of the recent changes in Club emphasis, and to the strength of the Council and the various committees.

Our gratitude must be expressed to the retiring members of the Council - Arlin Hackman, Bernie Ladouceur, Philip Martin, Betty Marwood, Pat Narraway and Ken Taylor - for their help and participation, for some of them over a number of years. We welcome in turn seven new Councillors (names underlined above).

Committee chairmen and members will be listed in the next issue of *Trail & Landscape*. It should be noted that our Federation of Ontario Naturalists representative is Jeff Harrison.

Barbara Martin, retiring Recording Secretary, would very much like to thank the following people for their delicious refreshments at the Annual Business Meeting: Jean (Hastie) and Herb Valliant, Barbara Campbell, Dan Brunton, Ellaine Dickson, Bill Gummer, Roger Taylor, John Sankey and Christine Henri. ▀

Comet Halley - March to May

Allan H. Reddoch

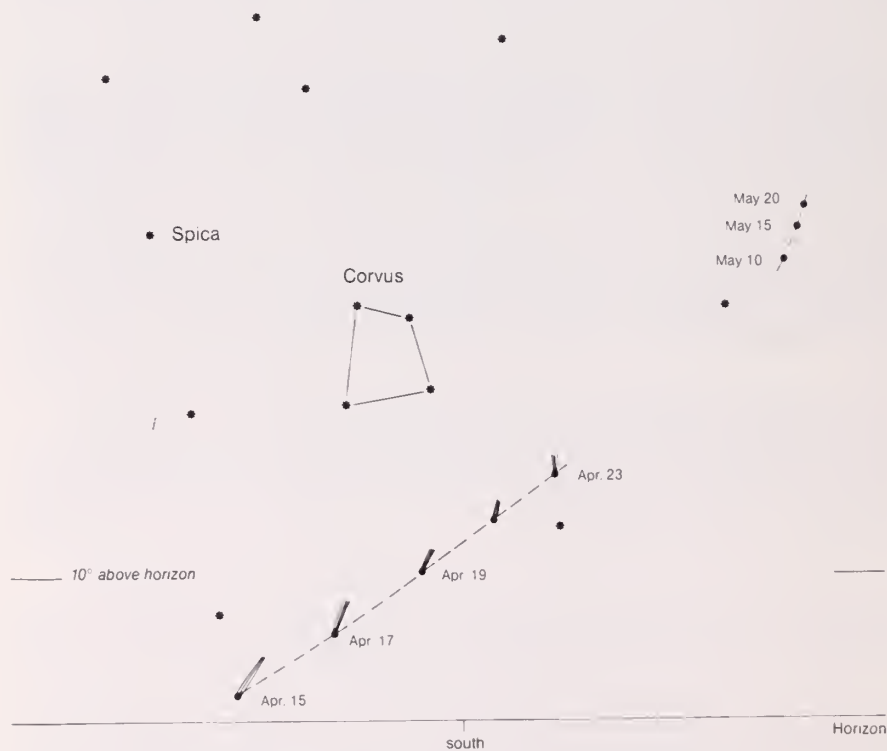
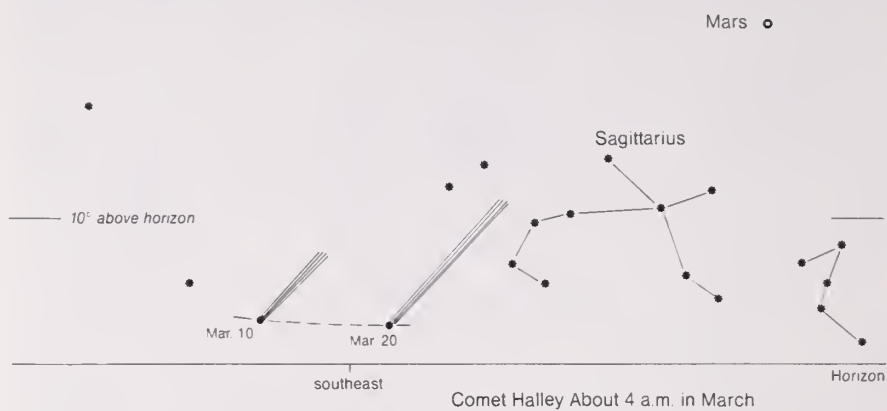
Comet Halley continues along its path much as expected, although it is somewhat brighter than the admittedly rough early predictions suggested. The greater brightness makes the comet easier to locate but so far has not dramatically changed the view.

In Ottawa, it was not until December that those with keen eyes and dark skies were able to detect Halley's Comet with the unaided eye. By then it was fairly easy to pick up with binoculars even in suburban areas, although the image was simply that of a fuzzy ball of light. In early January, as the comet was approaching the sun and the evening twilight in the west, the image remained essentially the same in the city. However, from just south of the airport beyond the worst of the city light, we could just detect a short tail, which had already been revealed in astronomers' photographs. Unfortunately, clear nights were few and far between and the Club's outing to the National Museum of Science and Technology took place under cloudy skies.

To the astronomer, Halley is a fairly run-of-the-mill comet similar to ones that appear unannounced every few years. Its major attraction is simply the predictability of its path which enables the planning of elaborate programs and the construction of complex equipment. As a result, in early March, five space probes will fly past Halley, while two more will be watching from a distance. This swarm should provide much new information about comets, including closeup views of the solid core. At the time of writing (January), the early scientific results from telescopes have been fairly modest and not too surprising.

In mid-March, observers will have to rise early, around 4 a.m., to see Halley low in the southeast just east of the constellation Sagittarius before it is lost in the dawn light. This period may offer the best views of the comet and its tail that we will get in Ottawa. By the end of the month, the moon will make viewing difficult.

In early April, when the tail should be at its longest, Halley will be just below our southern horizon in the early hours of the morning. Perhaps its tail may still be seen. This is the time when a trip to the south would help. Our friends in our twin club, the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club, at about 10° latitude will be able to see the comet about 35° above their southern horizon, and in comfortable temperatures too. From about the 15th to the 23rd when it is getting dimmer and its tail is decreasing, we should be able to see it moving rapidly upward from night to night in the south around



midnight or a little later. Then the moon interferes again. This problem is solved briefly on April 24th by a total eclipse of the moon which will be visible in the Pacific and western North America but unfortunately not in Ontario.

For most people, that will be the end of the story, although in the evenings of mid-May it should still be possible to detect a fuzzy ball of light with binoculars as Halley rises and recedes in the southern sky. The few who get a second chance will have to wait until 2061 A.D. ▣

Ottawa Regional Science Fair

Ken Taylor

Each spring The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club presents special awards to deserving exhibitors in the life sciences category of the Ottawa Regional Science Fair. This fair is a showcase where Ottawa-area students in grades 7 to 13 exhibit their scientific projects, collections and experiments. The 1985 fair was held from April 12 to 14 at the National Museum of Science and Technology.

Three exhibits were presented with Club awards last spring, and all three were judged to be approximately equal in merit. Philip Isotalo of St. Raymond's School was selected for his excellent project on butterflies and moths. Sabrina Magro and Debbie Rofner of St. Mark's School were chosen for their demonstration of the creation of hybrids by cross-pollination and the importance of hybridization to the "green revolution". Vijay Chauhan of Brookfield High School received an award for his demonstration of a chemical model which can be used to predict how potentially dangerous chemicals could be metabolized by living organisms.

Each special award winner received a cash prize and a one-year membership in The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club. Club judges for the event were Jack Gillett, Barbara Martin and Ken Taylor.

The Ottawa Regional Science Fair is always interesting, informative, and great fun for exhibitors and spectators alike. Why don't you plan on attending the fair with the whole family this spring? ▣

Don't Pick That!

Ross Anderson

Last November, Katharine and I were walking along the New York Central right-of-way in the National Capital Commission Greenbelt with our dog, Garvie. "You should have him on a leash," said the NCC Conservation Officer as he drove up in his truck. Katharine looked at me and added, "He usually is; he's trained, you know!" "The officer means the dog," I said and snapped the lead on the Newfoundland, who is a she and who was about to put her head in the truck window and lick the driver's face.

"We're picking these for church!" Some explanation seemed necessary. We were both carrying an armful of what looked like fodder for a small hay-eating dinosaur and the Conservation Officer appeared interested. "Perhaps you could get a permit for that if you would just call the office," observed the officer with real understanding, handing me a card with the telephone number of the NCC's Conservation Section on it.

"Imagine requiring a permit to walk a dog on a country road," said Katharine as the two NCC officers drove on with a wave. "He meant for picking weeds," I corrected. "We could have had our collection confiscated, and the congregation would have to come and see us in jail tonight instead of church!" "They wouldn't *do* that," protested Katharine. "No, I don't suppose they would either," I had to admit, trying to picture the rector making bail with the Saturday night collection.

We got back without further mishap. But we found out when we called the Conservation Section that the officer wasn't quite right on the matter of permits. We learned that permits are issued only for scientific studies - not for picking wild-flowers, not even dead weeds for decorating the church.



We learned that you can't pick wild things on NCC property. And you are required to walk your dog on a lead. As for our natural history observations, please look for them in *Trail & Landscape*. ▢

Collecting on NCC Land

Stew Hamill

A Conservation Officer's job is not an easy one. On one hand are those people who deliberately set out to use public natural resources for their own benefit, for example, Christmas tree thieves, trappers, and poachers. In apprehending these persons, the officers must always be prepared for the worst: resistance, violence, a firearm.

On the other hand, there are law-abiding persons collecting leaves, flowers, nuts and fruits who really pose little danger to the officer or cause little harm to the environment. But the officer can't always easily distinguish one from the other. Walking the dog or picking flowers could be a coverup. A second problem is that if anyone who wanted were allowed to collect, control would be lost, sensitive species and areas could be damaged, and certain features, such as a stand of wildflowers, could be removed before others can see them. A good example is the Mer Bleue situation, where blueberry pickers leaving the end of the boardwalk are severely damaging the bog.

The question is where to draw the line. To make a Conservation Officer's job easier, we have decided not to permit any collecting on NCC land, except in certain circumstances which I will describe later. This does not mean that charges will be laid for minor collecting activities. Charges are laid for collecting when it is obvious that the items, for example, fiddleheads, are being gathered in sufficient quantities to be sold. A naturalist picking a few leaves or dead flowers will be politely warned to refrain from such activities in order to protect the natural environment. I hope all conscientious naturalists will agree with this decision.

The exceptions allowed are for collecting when necessary for management (beaver trapping), scientific research, or educational (display) purposes. In these situations, a permit is issued, with restrictions if necessary, and a summary of the activity is requested at the end of the project. Projects are carefully screened to ensure that collecting really is required and that no more than necessary is removed. By this method, we can allow valid projects which require collecting and at the same time gain more information about natural resources on NCC land. ▢

Stew is Chief of the Conservation Section, Greenbelt Division, National Capital Commission. He wrote the above account in response to our request for an elaboration of the collecting situation on NCC lands. JMR

Garbage

Barbara Martin

Did you ever stop to think about your garbage? Or anyone else's, for that matter? If you are a keen bird-watcher, the phrase "garbage dump" may evoke images of ravens or rare gulls. But to most of us, "garbage" is simply the stuff we dutifully put out at the curb once a week, where it thankfully vanishes, never to be seen again. Well, not quite. Here are a few interesting facts.

In 1984, you and I and the rest of Ottawa-Carleton produced the following waste:

354,000	tonnes of municipal solid waste (residential, commercial, industrial and institutional)
120,000	tonnes of construction and demolition waste
70,000	tonnes of sewage sludge
est. 2,000	tonnes of liquid industrial and hazardous waste
1,200	tonnes of septic waste
500	tonnes of biomedical waste

547,700 tonnes total waste.

The 354,000 tonnes of "ordinary garbage" (so to speak) would cover the Queensway, fill Dow's Lake, and bury the field in Lansdowne Park. That's fairly impressive!

So, where does it all go to? Once again, looking at 1984, 432,050 tonnes (or 79%) went to area landfill sites (Trail Road being the main one), 35,000 tonnes (or 6%) was recovered by existing recycling operations, and 500 tonnes (or 0.1%) was incinerated (principally by hospitals and the federal government).

Let's take a look at "ordinary garbage", what you and I accumulate under the kitchen sink:

paper and cardboard	39%
food, wood and garden wastes	37%
glass	7%
metal	6%
plastics	5%
textiles, rubber, leather, etc.	6%

Currently, the collection and disposal of all this costs us taxpayers \$10 million each year, and "disposal" mostly means filling up someone's backyard with garbage.

So, what else can we do with it? Well, the primary options are incineration, composting and landfill. But, perhaps the question we should be asking is, "Where did it all come from?" Maybe we don't need to produce so much garbage in the first place. Think about it!

When you have thought about it, let your views be known to your local alderman and/or WastePlan (see below). The Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton is in the midst of a two-year project to come up with a master plan of how to deal with the next 25 years of garbage (1987 through 2011). I, myself, am a rabid recycler and backyard composter. What about you? Put your two-cents worth in now before you get stuck with a plan you don't like, such as a giant incinerator in the vacant lot down the street.

For information on recycling, contact:

The Recycling Council of Ontario
Box 942, Station P
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2Z2

telephone 1-800-387-2617 or 593-1756 in Toronto.

For more information on WastePlan, contact:

WastePlan
P.O. Box 3096, Station C
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4J3

telephone 731-5702. ☐

Trail & Landscape Circulation

Circulation of the January-February issue was as follows: a total of 1088 copies was mailed, 1064 of them to members, subscribing libraries and other institutions in Canada. Twenty-four copies were sent outside Canada, 21 of them to the United States. The cost of mailing that issue was \$59.27 (second class) for the 40-page issue.

Rules of Access to the Shirleys Bay Causeway

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club has a contract with the Department of National Defence that gives us access to the Connaught Rifle Range at Shirleys Bay for the purpose of observing birds. Access is contingent upon the following rules.

1. Birding activity is restricted to Chartrand Island, Haycock Island, the causeway connecting Haycock Island and the mainland, the shoreline east of the causeway, and the area southward to the road leading to the entrance gate.
2. Vehicles are to be parked in the area north of the Connaught Range Road, adjacent to the beach where boats are launched. Vehicles must not be parked on the road that runs west from this area to the Connaught Range gate. *No Parking* signs are posted along this road.
3. Access to the property is forbidden when the range is being used for military-type dry training or for firing, activities which can take place anytime during the year. You can find out if the range is available for birding by:
 - a) telephoning 828-1441 and asking whether the area is clear (should you get no answer, try 998-2116 or 998-0339);
 - b) checking the flag pole at the east entrance gate to the range:
 - a yellow flag at half mast indicates all clear for birding,
 - do not enter when the 6' x 6' red flag is flying or the flag pole is bare (the red flag indicates that firing is underway or will be shortly, and the absence of a flag indicates that training is underway);
 - c) enquiring at the guard house (in the summer, when the gate is open, you may enter and enquire at the guard house by the pistol range).

SHOULD YOU HEAR FIRING FROM THE RANGE WHEN YOU ARE ON THE PROPERTY, LEAVE AT ONCE.

In case of emergency during the working day, a telephone is located in Building 34 (upstairs). Pay telephones are located behind Building 47.

Frank Pope
January 1986

Recent Bird Sightings



Mark Gawn

The Big Day

Being in the Right Place at the Right Time can be crucial to birding. This year, the Right Place was Lac Deschênes and the Right Time was the afternoon of November 10. Late the day before, the first of several November snow squalls struck the Ottawa area. The tenth dawned cool and calm. The Ottawa River was as smooth as a sheet of glass, and several centimetres of snow lay on the ground. As it was a Sunday, and as the first snowfall of the year often produces interesting birds, many birders were up and about. Nonetheless, by noon it was apparent that not much had turned up and most curtailed their birding activities - but not for long.

A peaceful Sunday afternoon of armchair quarterback duties was soon interrupted by the first of several phone calls: a Pomarine Jaeger and a Purple Sandpiper at Kississippi Lookout! A quick check out the window was enough to see that the boringly calm skies of the morning had been replaced by an ominous gray low from the north. Several more alerts in rapid succession had most of the local birding community out by the river to try their luck: a Black-legged Kittiwake at Britannia and another Purple Sandpiper, this one at Stillwater Park.

As evening fell, a small group of intrepid observers shivered at the end of the Stillwater breakwater as they scanned upriver intently. A soft, flutey note attracted our attention to the Purple Sandpiper as it quickly flew by; however, our attention was drawn to a curious flock of birds flying down the river. My own thoughts ran something like this:

"Odd, a loose flock of 'ducks' over Shirleys Bay - must be Mallards."

Followed by:

"Those don't look like Mallards - they look like loons. Must be Mergansers ...?"

Then, as they swung closer, we all reached the same conclusion - they were all Red-throated Loons! But, how many? There were two large, loose flocks involved, making it hard to count; however, we all agreed that there were between 250 and 300 birds

involved!

This sighting is particularly interesting in light of similar events over the past few years. On November 12, 1984, over 2,000 loons were seen flying over Lac Deschênes, speculation being that a large portion of them were Red-throated. Furthermore, on the same date in 1983, some 60 Common and five Red-throateds were seen, also on Lac Deschênes. Also associated with these movements have been sightings of several rare species, notably Pomarine Jaeger, kittiwakes and, last year, a Northern Fulmar. Speculation holds that a large number of such birds gather in James Bay in the late fall and are forced south by the first freeze-up. The natural overland route to follow is the Ottawa River - Hudson River corridor. In essence, this is the reverse of the spring Arctic Tern movement first documented in the mid-1970s.

Questions remain. Is this an annual event, or is it unique, dependent on the rare juxtaposition of several events? If it is annual, how could it have gone undetected for so many years? What else can be expected? With that many loons, it is logical to assume that other "goodies" will turn up. How about an Arctic Loon? One thing is certain - the Ottawa River will be carefully checked next November!

The Day After

By the next morning, a high pressure cell had moved in and only a few relicts remained from the Big Day: seven Red-throated Loons and 11 Common. Most of them were seen migrating high overhead in the early morning. A Golden Eagle, once considered to be very rare in Ottawa but now known to pass through in small numbers, leisurely flapped southwards past the Shirleys Bay dyke.

Further Highlights?

After a start like that, anything else might be considered a bit of an anticlimax, but read on ...

Overall gull activity in Ottawa, with the exception of the Big Day, was average, with the usual handful of Thayers and Lesser Black-backed Gull reports. As usual, a few "oddballs" were about, including a first winter Glaucous-Herring hybrid. Somewhat further afield, a Black-headed Gull was present through early November at the Cornwall Power Dam, which featured 11 species of gull through November and December. A lone, late Bonaparte's Gull was at Ottawa Beach on The Day After, and on The Day Before, a Greater White-fronted Goose flew past a surprised OFNC bird walk. The latter was the only report this fall, surprising given the record-shattering spring we had for

this species. Three Whistling (sorry, Tundra) Swans sat on Lac Deschênes on November 20, for only the second late fall record of this species.

In late November, a surprised Yellow-breasted Chat appeared in the back yard of the more surprised Deans of banding fame, just down the street from the Carolina Wren reported in the last *Recent Bird Sightings* and around the corner from a feeder that regularly hosts a dozen House Finches and a handful of Northern Cardinals (except on Christmas Bird Counts!). My backyard has 50 House Sparrows; how about yours? Another Carolina Wren turned up at a feeder just in time for the Pakenham-Arnprior Christmas Bird Count.

Even more exotic was a Townsend Solitaire which appeared on a feeder north of Buckingham, just out of the 50 km radius. This elegant western species appears fairly regularly in the east but has not been seen in Ottawa since the 1960s. Another westerner, a Varied Thrush, arrived in early December at a feeder near Russell. This is our fifth local record of this striking species.

No one in Ottawa was in the Right Place at the Right Time for the rarest bird of the season. An immature Atlantic Puffin captured alive near Westmeath, just west of the Ottawa District, without a doubt flew through Ottawa. Now, wouldn't that have been a grand find for a Christmas Bird Count! There is a previous record of this species for Ottawa, one was "taken" (shot) here in 1881. At last report, the Westmeath puffin was out of intensive care and had been flown to a more appropriate puffin habitat in Newfoundland.

Winter Trends

November and December 1985 were unusually cold and snowy, leading to the first "real winter" Christmas Bird Counts that we have had in recent years. Because of the cold temperatures, the number of stragglers was down, especially blackbirds and waterfowl. Nonetheless, there were some interesting late birds; Field Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow and a Great Blue Heron were all recorded on the Ottawa-Hull Count. Notable also was the large flock of 75 Shovelers at Shirleys Bay through early November.

More interesting were the "real winter" birds. Bohemian Waxwings are always a treat to see, and their soft, rolling whistle is a delight to the ear on a cold winter's day. Hundreds of these birds are about this year, with one particularly large flock decorating the lush buckthorn thickets along the Ottawa River Parkway. Redpolls and Pine Grosbeaks are also about in large numbers. Pine Siskins and American Goldfinch are to be found in only low numbers, at feeders. Crossbills, last winter's feature birds, are largely absent.

Both species of three-toed woodpecker are being reported more frequently this winter. The Pakenham-Arnnprior Count recorded an all-time combined high of eight (six Black-backed and two "Northerns"). Most are being seen in dead White Spruce, feeding speculation that they are benefitting from the spread of the Spruce Budworm. "Oldtimers" will recall that at the height of the Dutch Elm infestation Ottawa used to get the North American Christmas Bird Count high counts for both species of three-toed. Birding visitors to Ottawa used to be quite surprised when, instead of leading them into the depths of the Gatineau, we would patrol the streets of the more-affluent section of town to "get" their three-toeds!

Small concentrations of Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks are about. Particularly popular is the area just south of the airport, where a Short-eared Owl was present in mid-December. One Red-tail has mastered the art of catching Rock Doves, sneaking up on them from behind the grain elevator at the Animal Disease Research Centre. Other Red-tails were observed at the end of December chasing Gulls and catching a Cottontail Rabbit, suggesting that they may be having trouble finding more traditional fare. Snowy Owls were noticeable in their absence, moving into the Arnnprior area only late in December. On the other hand, several Ottawa Valley Christmas Bird Counts had record counts of Northern Shrike, another northern "volavore" (raptor doesn't fit). At least one Gyrfalcon was reported, with sightings of a dark bird from several locations about the city. A Merlin that spent early November at the Britannia Filtration Plant was noteworthy.

Is it my imagination, or have Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks become more common in Ottawa over the past few winters? Last year, the relatively large numbers could be explained by the massive numbers of finches. This year there are even more accipiters (except Northern Goshawk, which is in low numbers) and fewer finches. Many of the accipiters are being seen in urban areas. Perhaps they have adjusted their tastes from siskins and crossbills to House Sparrows?

Hungry accipiters are not the only threat facing Ottawa's prolific House Sparrows. In other parts of the east, competition from the amazingly successful House Finch is reducing the number of House Sparrows. In the Ottawa area, House Finches are still largely concentrated in a few core areas such as Alta Vista, but their numbers are rapidly building up. With any luck, by next year half of the sparrows at my feeder will have been replaced by finches! The population of another recent immigrant, the Northern Cardinal, seems to have stabilized after a long period of increase. Thanks (?) to several recent introductions, Ring-necked Pheasants are being seen with greater frequency than we have come to expect.

This report is based on my personal notes, conversations with other birders, and the tape-recorded messages on the bird hotline (744-4704). It presents only a few highlights and trends. For a more complete analysis of birding in the Ottawa-Hull region, the reader should subscribe to *The Shrike*, a bi-monthly newsletter put out by The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club. ▣

A Note of Caution on Red-tailed Hawk Behaviour

Roy John

Recently, I observed a very dark-backed hawk at the outer Central Experimental Farm. Seen from the road, it was very difficult to identify. We drove into the farm itself and, after a bit of chasing, finally got a good look at it. It was an atypical Red-tailed Hawk.

The bird was a dark chocolate brown all over the back except for a pale area at the base of the tail. The front was a bright white with a small, dark brown necklace and a small, indistinct breast band. It joined company with another, more-typical, immature Red-tail.

Both birds were clearly hunting around the farm. Their technique was simple. They would wait in the trees or on a telephone pole until the Rock Doves settled around the barns. They would then fly at the flock, scattering them in all directions and make a grab at one of them. Often they were unsuccessful, but while we watched, one bird was successful at picking a bird out of mid-air. So Red-tails can and do catch birds in mid-air.

Red-tails have, in fact, been seen by others to catch many birds such as pheasants and partridge as well as Rock Doves. Thus, a bird hunting in this fashion is not necessarily a Gyrfalcon or a Northern Goshawk, but could be a Red-tail.

And remember that although standard field guides show only the "typical" birds, hawks, particularly immatures, are often difficult to identify. Few birders can identify all of the hawks they see all of the time. ▣

Activities of the Bird Records Subcommittee in 1985

Gordon Pringle

The Bird Records Subcommittee is the group responsible for maintaining the integrity of Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club records relating to birds. It is also intended to form a pool of technical expertise to assist the Club in bird-related matters.

The Subcommittee's time in 1985 was largely taken up with the production of a new edition of *A Birder's Checklist of Ottawa* (Trail & Landscape 19(4): 204-205 (1985)). The old checklist had become significantly out-of-date, and it was desirable to have a new one available for the Canadian Nature Federation Conference held here in July 1985 and for the Ornithological Congress scheduled for Ottawa in 1986. The new checklist is available at the Nature Canada bookstore for 75 ¢ and to Club members at Club meetings for 60 ¢.

The Subcommittee met five times during the year and considered information on 18 bird sightings, with the following reports being accepted.

Rare Bird Reports Passed in 1985

Pomarine Jaeger	Stephen O'Donnell, Richard Poulin (two reports), Sept. 21, 1975, Shirleys Bay. Reports originally considered in 1975 and not passed; now reconsidered in light of additional experience and increased knowledge of the species.
Hooded Warbler	Peter Walker, Sept. 18, 1984, Champlain Lookout.
Northern Fulmar	Bruce Di Labio, Nov. 12, 1984, Woodlawn.
Greater White-fronted Goose	Mark Gawn, Apr. 8, 1985, Carlsbad Springs, (one adult, two immatures).
Eurasian Wigeon	Roy John (found by Ellaine Dickson), Apr. 21, 1985, Sand Hill Road, Kanata.
Forster's Tern	Robert Bracken, May 11, 29, 1985, Stillwater Park.
Marbled Godwit	Jim Harris, J. Poirier, June 12, 1985, Bourget.

Brewster's Warbler	Stephen Gawn, July 4, 1985, Innis Point, (photographic record of a bird captured and banded).
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Stephen Desjardins, July 27, 1985, Kinburn.
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	Jim Harris, Sept. 22, 1985, Richmond Sewage Lagoon.
Laughing Gull	Michael Runtz, Oct. 15, 1985, Ottawa Beach.

Note that the Subcommittee is interested in out-of-season observations as well as outright rarities. These out-of-season sightings are needed to provide data points on the next edition of the Checklist. Further, note that the Subcommittee will consider reports submitted for an opinion, in cases where even the author of the report is uncertain.

Report forms are available from Gordon Pringle (224-0543). Reports written in note form are acceptable as are photographs and sound recordings. If you want some help in preparing a report, you may contact any member of the Subcommittee.

The Bird Records Subcommittee is anxious to receive reports on any species within the Ottawa District (50 km from the Peace Tower) that (a) is not on *A Birder's Checklist of Ottawa*, (b) has five or fewer records acceptable to the Subcommittee, (c) has not been sighted for ten years, or (d) is on the list of species requiring reports to the Ontario Bird Records Committee.

□

SPRING BIRD COUNT: MAY 18TH

This year the Spring Bird Count will take place on Sunday, May 18th. First started in 1969, the Spring Bird Count is usually an annual event, although it was not held last year.

The Count takes in the whole 50 km-radius area of the Ottawa District, which is divided into four large sections. Each section has a leader and a number of participants (similar to the Christmas Bird Count).

Anyone can participate, and many observers are out early in the morning (3 a.m.). Birds may be counted within the whole 24-hour period from midnight to midnight. The results are then phoned in to the section leader as soon as possible.

Everyone wishing to take part, please contact Bruce Di Labio at 729-6267.

The Ring-necked Pheasant in Ottawa - an Update

Bruce M. Di Labio

This note is to update a previous article (Trail & Landscape 18(5): 244-245 (1984)) where I discussed the changes in the Ring-necked Pheasant population in the Ottawa area.

A recent article in *The Citizen* (October 30, 1985, p. C3) reported a pheasant release program recently started in western Ottawa by the Ottawa Fish and Game Association. The object of the effort is to establish a large resident pheasant population.

Pheasants were first released in the Ottawa area in the early 1930s. The population size fluctuated over the years, but the last 20 years have seen a general decline. The Ottawa-Hull Christmas Bird Count in 1984 recorded only two birds. The same count on December 22, 1985, had 11 pheasants, most, no doubt, birds released in October. To date, three pheasants (two injured and one dead) have been taken to the Wild Bird Rehabilitation Centre operated by Kathy Nihei.

In my previous article, I suggested that the decline in the pheasant population may be related directly to severe winters and loss of habitat. Cleaning up unsightly (to human eyes) and overgrown areas in parks and along lakes and rivers removes what pheasant habitat there was available. As I stated before, the future does not look promising for the continued survival of the Ring-necked Pheasant in the Ottawa area. My opinion has not changed. ▢

More on Nesting Ring-billed Gulls

Bruce M. Di Labio

In an article on Ring-billed Gulls (Trail & Landscape 19(5): 244-246 (1985)), I reported that no nests were found at the Nepean Dump site in 1984 or 1985. Subsequent to the publication of this article, I learned that in 1985 Colin Gaskell and Ray Holland found 10 nests with eggs at the Nepean Dump in early June while I was out of town. After I returned, I searched for nests in late June and early July, but did not find any, the indication being that those nests had been bulldozed under.

▢

OFNC Sale



Raffle!

The raffle prize, the Aleta Karstad oil painting, *Alfred Bog*, shown above, will be drawn at the supper. All proceeds will go to the Alfred Bog Fund.

Place: Unitarian Church Hall

30 Cleary Street (See map elsewhere in this issue.)
#51 bus stops at Redwood Ave. and Richmond Rd.

Reservations: To order tickets, fill in the order form and send it along with \$7.00 (\$3.50 for students under 18) per ticket before April 15 to:

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club
c/o Ellaine Dickson
2037 Honeywell Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario
K2A 0P7

Soirée

Pot-luck Supper Friday

May 2, 1986

7:30 pm

Pot-luck

Every member attending will be required to bring one food item from the following categories as indicated on their ticket (quantity will also be indicated):

- meat dish
- vegetable dish
- buns or other bread item
- salad
- dessert

Refreshments (wine, non-alcoholic punch, coffee and tea) will be supplied.

Please Print

Name _____

Address _____

_____ phone _____

Please send me _____ tickets to the OFNC Annual Soirée at \$7.00 (\$3.50 for students under 18) per person. Enclosed please find my cheque or money order for

\$.....

If you have a favourite recipe and would like to have a ticket indicating a particular food category, please note category here

Natural History

Art & Photography

Exhibits

- This is *your* chance to display your talent.
- Photographic prints are eligible for a prize, a Barry Flahey print.

Those wishing to contribute an exhibit please see notice elsewhere in this issue.

Come Watch the Geese Going Home

Jack Holliday

The Canada Goose is well-named. The majority are born here in Canada, and although they spend about six months in the U.S.A., they come back "home" to nest and raise their families.

The flocks that traverse over Ottawa in the spring and fall do so about May 1st and October 10th. The autumn flight goes largely unnoticed because the flocks are usually high, 1,000 metres or more. Sometimes so high that faint honks can be heard, but the eye never does focus on the distant flock. This is especially so with a clear sky, when they blend into the clear blue. Usually they choose a day with stiff northerly winds which whip them quickly overhead and they are soon gone.

Spring is quite different. They usually fly no higher than 600 metres and often only 75 or 100 metres overhead. They are much more vocal in the spring, and it is their excited honking which directs the eyes to the flock, more times than not.

We Ottawans are fortunate to be on a flyway. Many flocks of geese cross the Ottawa River in the vicinity of the Champlain Bridge near my home. The Remic Rapid Lookout is one good vantage point, but windy. My favourite spot is at the north end of Keyworth Avenue, where there is a small, quiet bay of the river with a good view northwestward to King Mountain 13 kilometres away and some protection from the winds.

When conditions are right, many flocks of geese cross and can easily be seen with the unaided eye. With good binoculars, smudges across the river are revealed as geese, and they can usually be counted (if one wants to count them, that is).

For some reason, I often find that the chosen day is on a weekend, and my rule-of-thumb is the weekend closest to May 1st. The right day is usually after a rain and when a weather front is over our area. The majority of flocks seem to be in the morning, but they can be migrating at any time. Often flocks can be heard passing overhead in the black of the night.

My records for the last few years indicate the following right days: May 3, 1981; May 2, 1982; May 7, 1983; and April 28, 1984. I seem to have missed the peak of last year's migration. The spring of 1983 was late, and the geese were delayed a week.

Late April will find me on the alert for signs of geese, and I hope I'll be down at the Ottawa River shore on the right day to watch once again the flights of Canada Geese going home. Come and join me. ▢

Fifth Annual Christmas Bird Count Roundup 1985-1986 period

Astrid and Bruce Di Labio

After last year's phenomenal success, this year was relatively quiet by comparison. For the first time since 1977, the Ottawa-Hull Count did not record any new species, and Eastern Screech Owl and Barred Owl were both absent for the first time since 1978. Again, no Three-toed Woodpeckers were found, and only two Black-backed Woodpeckers were recorded. During the mid to late 1970s and even the early 1980s, we were known as the Three-toed Woodpecker capital. There has been a steady decline since 1982, possibly because most of the large, dead White Elms, which were their favoured feeding areas, have been cut down within the city limits and both species of three-toed woodpeckers have moved outside into the country.

The combined total species for the four local counts was 75, the lowest total since the Christmas Bird Count Roundup began in 1981. But, amazingly, the total individual count was a record high with nearly 60,000 birds, surpassing last year's record of 47,550, although last year's total of 97 species is 22 higher than this year. A few key species made the difference in numbers: Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Grosbeak, Snow Bunting and Common Redpoll.

The Ottawa-Hull Count was held on December 22, 1985, a week later than last year's count. Sixty-six species were recorded, the lowest total since 1974 and tying the 1977 and 1975 totals. Five record highs and two record-equalling highs were recorded. Seventy-seven observers and 65 feeder watchers took part in the day's event.

This year, for the first time in seven years, Bernie Ladouceur did not compile the Ottawa-Hull Count results. He has stepped down as compiler, although he has continued to participate as section leader in Gloucester. We would all like to thank Bernie for his work on the count over the years. In turn, we welcome Allan Cameron, who has taken over as compiler of this count.

On December 26, 1985, the Pakenham-Arnprior Count was held. Twenty-nine field observers and seven feeder watchers participated. A total of 44 species was recorded, including the only Carolina Wren (at a feeder at Galetta) and the only Wood Duck

(at Pakenham) of the Count Roundup. Other interesting finds were six Black-backed Woodpecker, two Three-toed Woodpecker, five Snowy Owl and 13 Northern Shrike. The count was compiled by Michael Runtz. This was the 60th Pakenham-area Christmas Bird Count in which Club honorary member, Verna McGiffin, has participated - a special highlight.

The Carleton Place Count took place on December 28, 1985. A total of 40 species was observed by 27 field observers and a network of 38 feeder watchers. The count was compiled again by Arnie Simpson. One new species was recorded, House Finch, bringing the all-time species total to 91.

As usual, the final count of the period was the Dunrobin-Breckenridge Count, held on January 5, 1986. The results from 41 field observers and 18 feeder watchers were compiled by Bruce Di Labio. Fifty-two species were recorded, matching the record high set in 1982. The early morning weather was reminiscent of last year's disastrous count, but by late morning the skies cleared and it turned out to be a great day of birding. Many new record highs were achieved, and one new species, Eastern Screech-Owl, was added, bringing the all-time total to 71 species in five years.

Correction: In last year's Roundup (Trail & Landscape 19(2): 68-71 (1985)), Cedar Waxwing was overlooked as one of two new species for the Dunrobin-Breckenridge Count.



Helping with the compilation of the Dunrobin-Breckenridge Count are, left to right, Jack Horner, Jim Harris, Bernie Ladouceur, Ian Jones and Bob Gorman. Photograph from a slide by Bruce Di Labio.

1985-1986 CHRISTMAS BIRO COUNT ROUNUP

Species	Ottawa- Hull	Pakenham- Arnprior	Carleton Place	Dunrobin- Breckenridge
Great Blue Heron	1	-	-	-
Canada Goose	1	-	-	-
Wood Duck	-	1***	-	-
American Black Duck	234	-	-	136*
Mallard	132	1	-	48*
Black/Mallard hybrid	7	-	-	-
Greater Scaup	1	-	-	-
Lesser Scaup	3	-	-	-
Common Goldeneye	356	-	7	-
Barrow's Goldeneye	2***	-	-	-
Hooded Merganser	3	-	-	-
Common Merganser	45	1	15	-
Red-breasted Merganser	1	-	-	-
Sharp-shinned Hawk	8*	2	1***	3*
Cooper's Hawk	3	-	1***	1
Northern Goshawk	5	2	-	2
Red-tailed Hawk	3	7	2	1
Rough-legged Hawk	2	-	-	1
American Kestrel	10	2	1	4
Gray Partridge	79	51	-	27
Ring-necked Pheasant	11	-	-	-
Ruffed Grouse	42	45	26	43*
Herring Gull	54	-	-	-
Iceland Gull	2	-	-	-
Glaucous Gull	19	-	-	-
Great Black-backed Gull	5	-	-	-
Rock Dove	4,730	877*	588	300
Mourning Dove	94	12	59*	17*
Eastern Screech-Owl	-	-	1	1**
Great Horned Owl	18	13*	1	15
Snowy Owl	1	5*	-	2***
Barred Owl	-	-	-	1
Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	1
Downy Woodpecker	164	90*	73	77
Hairy Woodpecker	116	82*	88	109
Three-toed Woodpecker	-	2	-	1
Black-backed Woodpecker	2	6*	-	3
Pileated Woodpecker	16*	11	9	18*
Horned Lark	3	169*	7*	302*
Blue Jay	270	409	247	340*
American Crow	908	117*	138	75
Common Raven	10	9	1***	44*
Black-capped Chickadee	2,557	709	540	1,138
Red-breasted Nuthatch	7	21	-	17
White-breasted Nuthatch	186	76	104	111
Brown Creeper	13	12	2	25

* record high

** new species for the count (therefore also record high for that species)

*** ties record high.

1985-1986 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT ROUNDUP (continued)

Species	Ottawa- Hull	Pakenham- Arnprior	Carleton Place	Dunrobin- Breckenridge
Carolina Wren	-	1***	-	-
Golden-crowned Kinglet	22	23	11	14
American Robin	23	1	6*	2
Northern Mockingbird	2	-	-	-
Bohemian Waxwing	4,953*	867*	764	626*
Cedar Waxwing	8	1	-	1***
Northern Shrike	11	13*	4	10
European Starling	4,522	360	154	304*
Northern Cardinal	42	1	17*	4*
American Tree Sparrow	287	107	275	277
Chipping Sparrow	1***	-	-	-
Field Sparrow	1	-	-	-
Song Sparrow	6	-	1	2***
White-throated Sparrow	6	-	5***	-
Dark-eyed Junco	142	20	30	29
Lapland Longspur	-	1	-	3*
Snow Bunting	608	1,374	609	4,040*
Red-winged Blackbird	3	-	-	1***
Common Grackle	-	-	-	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	-	-	-
Pine Grosbeak	1,446*	189	82	196
Purple Finch	9	-	4	-
House Finch	49*	-	7**	-
White-winged Crossbill	-	-	-	36
Common Redpoll	3,217	820	344	1,999*
Hoary Redpoll	2	-	-	4*
Pine Siskin	130	1	46	7
American Goldfinch	434	107	192	103
Evening Grosbeak	1,576	669	754	1,419*
House Sparrow	4,242	2,011*	316	613

* record high

** new species for the count (therefore also record high for that species)

*** ties record high.

	Ottawa- Hull	Pakenham- Arnprior	Carleton Place	Dunrobin- Breckenridge
Total Individuals	31,867	9,925	5,532	12,554
Total Species	66	44	40	52

SUMMARY: TOTALS FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS

	1982-1983	1983-1984	1984-1985	1985-1986
Total Individuals	41,675	29,129	47,550	59,878
Total Species	77	78	97	75

Acknowledgements: We wish to thank all the compilers and section leaders for their efforts in compiling the results and getting them to us, and the members of The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, the Club des ornithologues de l'Outaouais and the Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club for their support.



Among the participants in the Dunrobin-Breckenridge Count were:

back row (standing): Bob Bracken, John Dubois, Paul Martin, Ron Curtis, Bernie Ladouceur, Bruce Di Labio, Ian Jones, Jack Horner, Michael Runtz and Roy John;

front row (seated): Paul Martin, Jim Harris, Daniel St. Hilaire, Bob Gorman and Michelle Elder.

Photograph from a slide by Richard Poulin. ▣

Are Male and Female Gray Partridge Similar?

Edith Dahlschen

"Sexes similar". That is what R.T. Peterson says in the fourth edition (1980) of *A Field Guide to the Birds* on page 149. And that is what I thought after watching my Gray Partridges for six years. I have reported on my partridges in last year's May-August issue of *Trail & Landscape* and thought perhaps readers would like to hear a little update on what's happening.

Well, I have a record number of Gray Partridges this year at my feeder near Mooney's Bay on the Rideau River. Three families developed from last year's birds, although at the moment there is only one covey feeding regularly. I do not know where the other two coveys have gone, but I hope they will turn up later in the winter.

And, to my amazement, I discovered something new. Within the covey of 14 birds, there are five which have a distinctly light-coloured (buff) strip around the crown and a little less distinct around the bib (throat) and none or just a few brown feathers on the belly patch. I was very puzzled until I looked up both my bird guides. As I quoted above, Peterson says, "sexes similar". But the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* states (on page 220) that the face and throat are paler in the female and the brown belly patch is only on the male. The illustration shows these differences but not the appearance of the crown ring, or rather, half-ring. (The ring does not circle around the back of the head.) Perhaps I was not observant enough in the past and did not see these differences between the sexes.

One interesting family was around all last summer, a family of four birds of which only one was a chick. When the coveys split up early last spring, there were several single birds around and three pairs. One day, I observed a bird with an injured leg - it limped badly on one foot. I did not think it would survive but decided not to try and catch it. Sure enough - obviously a lady - she paired with one of the singles and was soon better but still hobbling. Until late in the season, there was still one bird alone until my limping lady and her mate appeared with one chick. And, wouldn't you know, Mr. Bachelor joined the group. This faithful family of four was chased away by the present residents, but I do hope they survive and come back.

By the way, I also reported having a male Northern Cardinal at my feeder last winter. I did not see him all summer, but on October 20th he came back with a female! Isn't that wonderful?

■

The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas: Ottawa Region

Christine Hanrahan

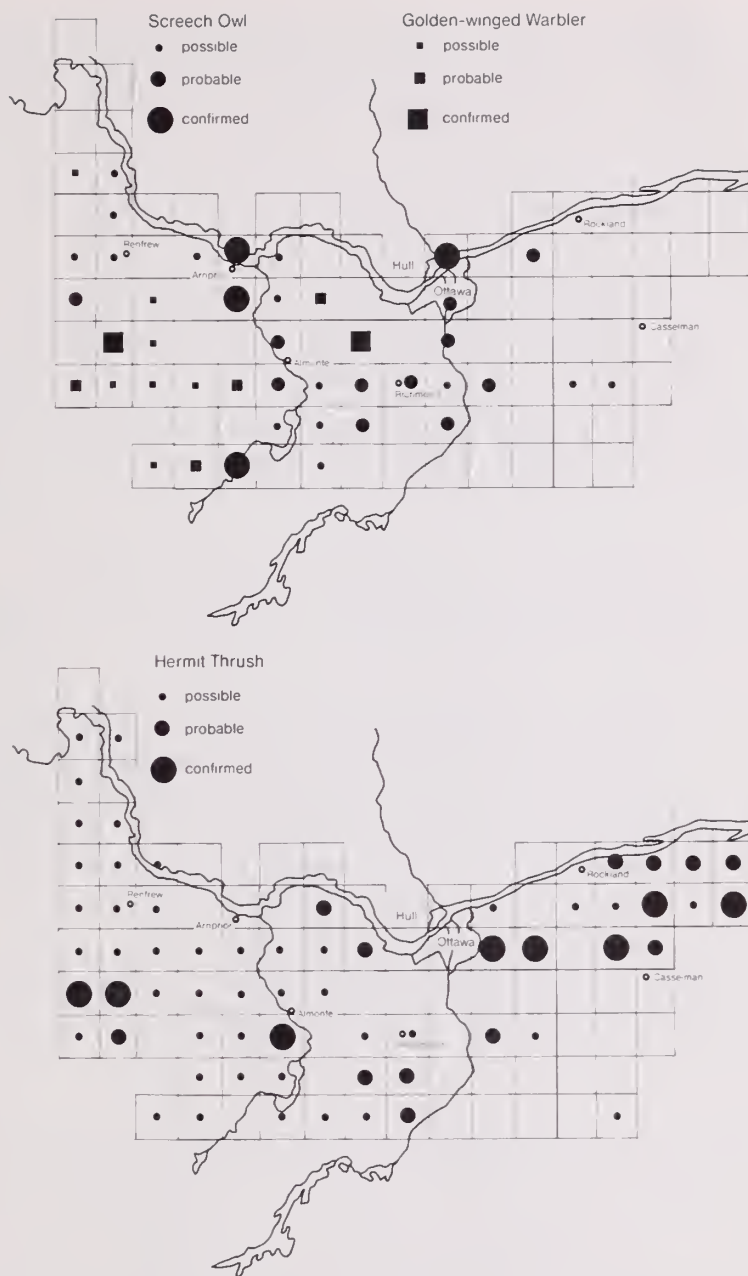
Five very short years ago, in 1981, the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project (OBBA) began. Throughout the province, enthusiastic birders headed off into the field, data cards in hand, determined to discover as much as they could about Ontario's breeding birds. This enthusiasm carried them through to the project's end in 1985. Along the way, they amassed a tremendous amount of data. That accumulated data will eventually be published in book form, an event greatly anticipated by most atlassers.

The Ottawa Region (Region 24) has been one of the most keenly active areas in the province. Participation has been high, especially in the last few years, with over 85 people taking part either as regular atlassers or as contributors of casual observations. Without their help, Region 24 would not have been able to finish off the project with such flair. I'd like, therefore, to extend a big and heartfelt *thank you* to each and every participant!

Region 24 began with 77 squares, but by 1985 had responsibility for 111 squares. These additional squares came from adjacent regions needing outside help and were therefore reassigned to us. We eventually spread out into Regions 22 (Thousand Islands), 23 (Cornwall), 25 (Perth) and 27 (Algonquin). Along the way, we "lost" one square (if such it can be called), a sliver of island in the Ottawa River less than 5% of which was in Ontario. We decided to let the Quebec Atlas handle that one since all but a fraction is within their province.

When discussing Atlas results for 1985, we have excluded the seven Algonquin squares. Because they are not contiguous with our own region, unlike the rest of our reassigned squares, we prefer to treat them separately. Thus, unless otherwise indicated, discussion centres around those squares from Regions 22, 23 and 25, as well as our own Region 24, a total of 104 squares.

Adequate coverage was defined as 82 species for all squares except the following: those squares in the infamous "cornbelt" area, east of the Rideau River and south of Highway 417, where a total of 72 species was considered adequate, and all partial squares (those having from 5% to approximately 65% of their land mass in Ontario). For these latter squares, the definition of



Examples of the success of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project are the two maps above, which show breeding evidence for Screech Owl, Hermit Thrush and Golden-winged Warbler in the Ottawa Region and some adjacent squares. In addition, Hermit Thrush is a possible breeder in six of the seven Algonquin squares and a probable breeder in one.

adequate varied from square to square depending on their size and the available habitat. However, I should note that even the tiny 5% squares managed to achieve 50+ species. Using the above definitions of adequate, all squares were satisfactorily covered and many far exceeded the minimum. We began 1985 with only 17 squares having over 100 species. We ended the year with 46 (or 41%) of the 104 squares at or over (in many cases well over) the 100 species mark. Seventy-four squares (or 66%) had totals of 90+ species, far surpassing our previous expectations.

Because 1985 was the last year of the Atlas project, we wanted to make a special effort to ensure that all squares received top coverage. Reviewing the data to 1984, we saw that a lot of squares still needed much work. Some had fewer than the designated minimum number of species, others were adequately covered but had the potential to go well over 100 species. Other squares had sufficiently high species totals but were severely underconfirmed. A number of these squares, including the few "virgin" squares, were assigned to atlasers, but we were still left with a lot of squares needing work and with no takers. We also knew that a number of species were under-atlased, that is, they were undoubtedly present on most squares but had not yet been recorded except on a low number of squares. This was particularly true of owls and other nocturnal species.

Accordingly, we planned two projects to deal with these problems. The under-atlased nocturnal species would be dealt with by the implementation of Nocturnal Bird Routes (see below). Meanwhile, those squares needing extra work in terms of species and/or confirmations would be blitzed by what one of the committee members called "square-busters" (remember the Ghost-busters?). Thus the concept of square-busting, as opposed to square-bashing, was born: a small group of very dedicated atlasers, more-or-less on call, would visit those squares needing the most work. Many of these squares were in the extreme western (UF) sector or far off in the dry reaches of cornbelt country. This situation frequently meant much driving, especially in the west where roads are fewer and routes to many squares circuitous.

Because even the most well-intentioned of atlasers sometimes found other priorities taking over, we kept in fairly frequent contact with everyone in order to chart their atlasing progress. This monitoring allowed us to send our square-busting teams to squares not getting as much coverage as we felt was necessary. As the season drew inexorably to a close, a nagging anxiety that we would miss a square still needing more work began to possess us. We drew and redrew charts depicting totals for each square, charts showing numbers of confirmed species, and these figures would change with each phone-around to the atlasers. Squares with low confirmation rates became a priority as we saw species totals rise for most squares. A low confirmation figure would induce near heart attacks and cause some

of us to be in our cars at 3 o'clock the next morning anxiously driving to the offending square. However, by season's end, we were well satisfied. Some squares with low confirmation rates did slip by, which just goes to show that we are not perfect! Overall, the square-busting was tremendously successful.

Several interesting species were found in the last Atlas year (1985). Surely the most exciting was the Bald Eagle which nested successfully in Region 24, a first for our area. A Bay-breasted Warbler on territory in the UF sector was also new for the breeding birds in our region. A Wild Turkey was found in the Renfrew area and, if accepted as a possible breeder, would constitute yet another first. Whether accepted or not, the sighting is an interesting one and just goes to show that when atlassing you never know what might turn up next. What did turn up, on several new squares, were more Wilson's Phalaropes, another Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and, good news, more Loggerhead Shrikes. Some of the really interesting data collected in 1985, however, concerned owls.

As noted earlier, we decided to run a series of Nocturnal Bird Routes to try to increase the data on owls and other nocturnal birds in our region. To generate more interest in this project, we held an information session at the National Museum of Natural Sciences on February 14th. This meeting drew a number of interested people, and eventually we had approximately 30 participants willing to take part. The Nocturnal Bird Routes were capably organized by Mark Gawn, who planned 15 routes covering three to four squares each. The participants covered their Routes at least twice during the March-May period. In spite of frequent poor weather conditions, the Nocturnal Bird Routes were a roaring success. Most squares ended up having at least one species of owl, some had five species!

To no one's surprise, Great Horned Owl was by far the most wide-spread species, followed by Saw-whet Owl. Saw-whet Owl, in fact, nearly doubled its numbers in 1985, yet in spite of this remarkable showing, no new nests or other evidence of confirmed breeding was found. A number of these owls were recorded as being on territory, however. Long-eared and Barred Owls were found in about equal numbers and nearly tied for third place. Barred Owl is undoubtedly present on most, if not all, squares in the UF sector but is not always easy to find. Long-eared Owl was a real surprise, for until the late 1970s this species was considered uncommon in our area. We now have it recorded on 41 squares. But the biggest surprise of all was Screech Owl, which was found in unprecedented numbers in 1985. By the end of May, their numbers had more than doubled from their pre-1985 showing. Most of the sightings were concentrated in the Almonte-Manotick area and along the Rideau/Mississippi River corridors with scattered sightings elsewhere. The following Table summarizes the owl data for all squares, excluding Algonquin:

<u>Species</u>	<u>% of squares</u>
Screech Owl	28%
Great Horned Owl	89%
Barred Owl	38%
Long-eared Owl	39%
Saw-whet Owl	69%

Other nocturnal species were not as widely recorded as we had hoped because most Nocturnal Bird Routes were surveyed prior to May. Nonetheless, some species showed a marked increase, with American Woodcock numbers improving greatly. Common Nighthawk and Whip-Poor-Will were found less often than we had anticipated, and both species are surely on most squares.

Once again, weeknight square bashings were held throughout June and July. Participation increased dramatically from the previous year (1984) with a total of 22 people taking part. An average of nine species was added to each square, bringing some to the 82/72 species minimum and pushing others over the 90 species mark. A significant number of upgrades were made, including, most importantly, large numbers of confirmations. The square bashings held their own unique pleasures. Whether it was the challenge inherent in finding as many new species for the square as one could in those few short evening hours, the lust to confirm all the "possibles" and "probables", or perhaps the group spirit imbuing the whole endeavour, who knows? But one thing was certain, the evenings were *fun*.

A small group of Ottawa atlasers headed north this summer to gather data in the Algonquin Region. This region had earlier requested help, and we agreed to take on eight squares as a special project. One of these, accessible only by float-plane, had to be returned, leaving us with seven squares to atlas. Four different parties made nine separate overnight trips to the area and put in over 100 hours of atlassing time. Unfortunately, low diversity of habitat types, poor or nonexistent roads, and adverse weather conditions produced mixed results. The weather, in fact, seemed determined to keep atlasers in abeyance. One of the first excursions to the area was made on the June first weekend when many parts of Ontario were experiencing tornadoes and near-hurricane conditions. Algonquin met atlasers with its own version of this weather, and "groans of roaring wind and rain", as Shakespeare so aptly wrote, forced a retreat.

In spite of the weather, an average of 75 species per square was found, with a final combined total of 113 species. Some of the highlights were Sedge Wren (two squares), Lincoln's Sparrow (four squares), Black-backed Woodpecker (five squares) and Gray Jay (seven squares). Boreal forest warblers, rare in our region during breeding season, were found there in good numbers: Bay-breasted Warbler on seven squares, Tennessee Warb-

ler on five, and Cape May Warbler on four squares. Paul Jones, who coordinated our Algonquin squares superbly, perhaps best summed up the experience. "The opportunity to hike through northern woods and canoe Algonquin's lakes and rivers was greatly appreciated." Those who participated in the venture surely agree heartily.

The James L. Baillie Fund for Bird Research and Preservation once again kindly awarded us a small grant for special Atlas activities. We were thus able to reimburse a portion of the money spent on gas by those individuals participating in our special projects (Nocturnal Bird Routes, square-busting and the Algonquin effort).

I should very much like to thank all members of the Ottawa Atlas Committee, who shared with me the joys and frustrations of the last few years. If it were not for their help and participation, Region 24's contribution to the Atlas would be that much poorer. Thank you, Frank Bell, Mark Gawn, Roy John and Paul Jones. ▢

The Mystery of Nineteen Newts

Sheila C. Thomson

In March of 1985, while skiing across the ice of a small lake in the Madawaska hills, we investigated a tiny patch of open water near one shore where a spring was bubbling up into the lake. Four Red-spotted Newts were lying dead on their backs in the shallow water. One week later, the patch of open water had enlarged to five or six metres in diameter. To our astonishment, we counted nineteen newts lying belly-up on the bottom in several centimetres of water.

What killed them? Not acid rain, as this is a limestone lake, with Poison Ivy decorating the shores. A check with herpetologist Francis Cook revealed that he was not unaware of this kind of phenomenon, but he did not have the answer either. Lack of oxygen seemed unlikely in this, a well-known trout lake. The bubbling spring made us question whether the ice here would freeze right to the bottom. Is this an annual phenomenon in the salamander year, or did some disaster strike in the winter of 1985? The mystery remains unsolved. ▢

CANADIAN NATURE FEDERATION CONFERENCE

The Canadian Nature Federation will be holding its 15th Annual National Conference July 23rd to 26th, 1986, at Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland.

Conference activities include natural history tours to Newfoundland's many rich and diverse wild areas; a Symposium titled "Island Ecology; A Disappearing Wilderness"; and a full schedule of social events highlighted by a "Newfie Night". In all, a wonderful opportunity for a most unique and educational family holiday!

For a detailed brochure outlining Conference activities and tours, please contact the Canadian Nature Federation, 75 Albert Street, Suite 203, Ottawa K1P 6G1 or call 238-6154.

* * *

HYMENOPTERA WORKSHOP

The Biosystematics Research Institute, Canada Department of Agriculture, will be holding a second workshop on the insect order HYMENOPTERA.

Course Objective: The recognition of about 70 families of Hymenoptera.

Time and Location: May 1 to 9, 1986, in the K.W. Neatby Building on the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa.

The major hymenopterous groups will be taught by the following B.R.I. taxonomists: H. Goulet (Symphyta), W.R.M. Mason (super families of Hymenoptera, Aculeata), M. Sharkey (Ichneumonoidea, Braconidae), C. Yoshimoto and G. Gibson (Chalcidoidea and Cynipoidea), L. Masner (Proctotrupoidea) and M. Sanborne (Ichneumonidae). Lectures will cover classification, diagnosis, identification, life histories and economic importance of these groups of Hymenoptera. Classes will be held between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. with lunch and supper breaks. Each participant will receive a syllabus containing the lecture material with illustrations, keys and pertinent literature.

The course will be limited to 25 applicants, and a fee of \$300. (CDN) will be charged. Candidates will be chosen on a first come first served basis. (Overall reaction to the first Hymenoptera Workshop was very favourable.) Course application forms and further information may be obtained by contacting: Mike Sarazin, Biosystematics Research Institute, K.W. Neatby Building, Room 3135, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C6. (Telephone (613) 996-1665).

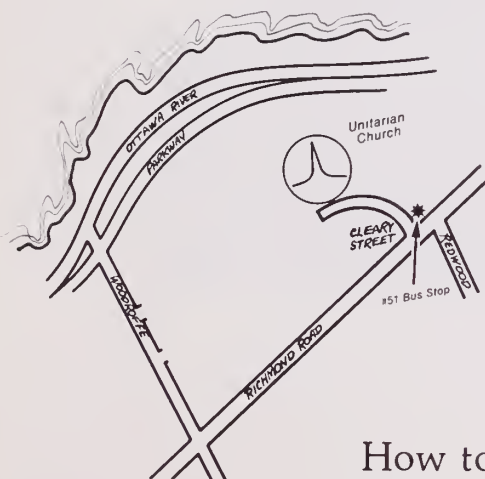
Members' Soiree

Help make this another special evening by contributing your slides, photographs and art. Those members wishing to do so please contact Colin Gaskell (728-7217) for confirmation or clarification before April 19th.

Prints and artwork must be mounted for easy handling. All items for display should be brought to the Unitarian Church between 4 and 6 p.m. on May 2nd and taken home at the end of the evening.

This year, the best overall colour or black and white photographic print will be selected by ballots cast by all Club members in attendance. The lucky winner will take home an art print by local artist, Barry Flahey, titled *The Marmot*.

Prizes will also be awarded for the best Macoun Club displays. Children attending either primary or secondary school who are OFNC members but not Macoun members are invited to compete. Three excellent books are being offered as prizes: *The World of Robert Bateman*, *The Wonder of Canadian Birds* by Savage, and *Insects Harmful to Forest Trees* by Martineau.



See the centrefold for complete information on the Pot-luck Supper. □

How to Get to the Soirée

Coming Events

arranged by the Excursions and Lectures Committee
Ellaine Dickson (722-3050)

Times stated for excursions are departure times. Please arrive earlier; leaders start promptly. If you need a ride, don't hesitate to ask the leader. Restricted trips will be open to non-members only after the indicated deadlines.

Date and time to be decided AMPHIBIANS IN SPRING
Leader: Stephen Darbyshire
Meet: to be decided
The success of this outing is very dependent on the weather. If you wish to participate, telephone the Club number (722-3050) before March 10. When a date and a meeting place for the outing have been fixed, you will be notified by telephone. To accommodate more people, Stephen may run the excursion twice. Bring a strong flashlight and a long-handled dip net; wear rubber boots and warm clothes.

Sunday WINTER BIRD BUS TRIP TO THE KINGSTON AREA
2 March Leader: Tom Hanrahan (230-5290)
7:00 a.m. Meet: National Museum of Natural Sciences, front entrance, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets
Cost: none
The outing will probably include a visit to either Amherst Island or Wolfe Island to observe owls and hawks. Dress warmly; bring binoculars and a hearty lunch. The bus should return to Ottawa by 6 p.m. Register early by telephoning the Club number (722-3050). The Dinobus will be provided free of charge by the National Museum of Natural Sciences.

Tuesday OFNC MONTHLY MEETING
11 March THE FUTURE OF THE GREAT LAKES
8:00 p.m. Speaker: Jim Bruce
Meet: Auditorium, National Museum of Natural
 Sciences, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets
Jim Bruce has served since 1980 as the Assistant
Deputy Minister of the Atmospheric Environment Service of Environment Canada. He has also held positions as Assistant Deputy Minister of the Environmental Management Service and was the first director of the Canada Centre for Inland Waters. Mr. Bruce will present an illustrated talk on the likely future impacts of water resource demands, climate, and toxic contaminants on Great Lakes water levels, water quality and shoreline habitats.

Saturday LATE WINTER BIRDS AND EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS
15 March Leader: Bruce Di Labio (729-6267)
7:30 a.m. Meet: Loblaw's, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,
 Carling Avenue at Woodroffe Avenue
Dress warmly and wear waterproof footwear; binoculars are essential. This will be a half-day outing. Highlights might include Snowy Owls, winter hawks and Pine Grosbeaks.

Wednesday NIGHT OWLING
26 March Leader: Bruce Di Labio (729-6267)
6:30 p.m. Meet: Neatby Building, Central Experimental Farm,
 one block west of the Irving Place - Maple
 Drive stoplight on Carling Avenue. Use the
 parking lot west of the Neatby Building and
 south of the greenhouses.
Take advantage of this field workshop to learn the diagnostic "hoots" of the owls and the "songs" of some other nocturnal birds. Participants will probably hear Great Horned, Barred, Saw-whet and, with a little luck, Long-eared Owls. Telephone Bruce if you plan to go. He will then be able to contact you if the trip is postponed because of unfavourable weather. If all goes well, the trip will last until midnight; if the weather and/or the birds are uncooperative, it will finish earlier.

Sunday BUS EXCURSION: BIRDING AT PRESQU'ILE
6 April Leaders: Bruce Di Labio and Colin Gaskell
6:30 a.m. Meet: Loblaw's, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,
 Carling Avenue at Woodroffe Avenue
Cost: \$20.00 per person (prepaid at least ten days
 in advance)

This popular outing has become a spring tradition. The highlight of the trip will be the large flocks of waterfowl gathered at the provincial park prior to continuing their northward migration. Bring enough food for this all-day excursion. Dress warmly and wear waterproof footwear. Bring binoculars or, better still, a telescope. Make your reservation by sending a cheque or money order (payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club) to Ellaine Dickson, 2037 Honeywell Avenue, Ottawa K2A 0P7, at least ten days in advance. Include your name, address, telephone number and the name of the outing.

Saturday EARLY MORNING OWLING
12 April Leader: Bruce Di Labio (729-6267)
2:00 a.m. Meet: Neatby Building, Central Experimental Farm,
 one block west of the Irving Place - Maple
 Drive stoplight on Carling Avenue. Use the
 parking lot west of the Neatby Building and
 south of the greenhouses.

If the outing goes according to plan, participants will learn to identify several owls and other nocturnal birds by their characteristic sounds, enjoy the dawn chorus, and see such birds as woodcock and snipe. Telephone Bruce if you are interested in participating. If for some reason the trip is postponed, he will be able to notify you. The outing is expected to last until about 8 o'clock.

Saturday TREES IN SPRING
19 April Leaders: Ellaine Dickson and Aileen Mason
9:00 a.m. Meet: National Museum of Natural Sciences, front
 entrance, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets

The emphasis will be on identifying trees when they are not in leaf; some species might be in bloom. The National Museum of Natural Sciences' Dinobus will be provided free of charge for transportation. Those wishing to go should register at least ten days in advance by telephoning the Club number (722-3050). Dress warmly and wear waterproof footwear. Bring a lunch for this half-day outing.

Tuesday OFNC MONTHLY MEETING
 22 April* DR. JOHN RICHARDSON, FIRST NATURALIST IN THE
 8:00 p.m. NORTHWEST

Speaker: Stewart Houston
 Meet: Auditorium, National Museum of Natural
 Sciences, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets

Stewart Houston, an Honorary Member and a radiologist by profession, has been interested in bird banding since 1943. He has banded some 90,000 birds and has written 162 papers on ornithology. His talk on the life and work of a pioneer naturalist will be an interesting departure from the usual range of topics.

* This of the fourth, not the second, Tuesday in April.

Sunday BUS EXCURSION: HAWK MIGRATION AT DERBY HILL, N.Y.
 27 April Leaders: Bruce Di Labio and Steve O'Donnell
 6:30 a.m. Meet: Loblaws, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,
 Carling Avenue at Woodroffe Avenue

Cost: \$20.00 per person (prepaid at least ten days in advance)

When weather conditions and timing are favourable, the spectacle of thousands of hawks migrating through Derby Hill is well worth the long bus ride. Bring enough food for this all-day outing. Dress warmly and wear waterproof footwear. Binoculars are essential. Canadians should bring proof of citizenship, and non-Canadians should carry passports. Binoculars, cameras and other equipment in "new" condition should be registered with Canada Customs (Port of Ottawa, 360 Coventry Road, or Port of Hull, Place du Portage, Phase II, COMM Level 1) in advance of the trip. Make your reservation by mailing your cheque or money order (payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club) to Ellaine Dickson, 2037 Honeywell Avenue, Ottawa K2A 0P7, at least ten days in advance. Include your name, address, telephone number and the trip name. If the weather forecast on the day before the excursion is particularly unfavourable, the trip will be cancelled. If the weather forecast for the eastern end of Lake Ontario (telephone 998-3440) is poor and you cannot be reached by telephone on the 26th, please telephone Rick Leavens (835-3336) to confirm the status of the trip. Be sure to turn your clock forward one hour on Saturday night!

Friday OFNC SOIREE - POT-LUCK SUPPER
2 May Meet: Unitarian Church Hall, 30 Cleary Street
7:30 p.m. See the centrefold and page 75 for additional
 details.

Saturday BIRD WALK FOR BEGINNERS
3 May Leader: Ray Holland (225-9655)
7:30 a.m. Meet: Britannia Woods (entrance to Britannia
 Filtration Plant; Bus #51 stops here)
 This is the first of a series of four Saturday
 morning walks for novice birders to be offered in
 May. Binoculars are essential, and insect repellent
 and waterproof footwear are advisable.

Wednesday EVENING STROLL IN STONY SWAMP
7 May Leader: Ellaine Dickson
6:30 p.m. Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast
 corner by the garden centre, Richmond and
 Assaly Roads
 This is the first of four informal evening walks
 offered each May to expand members' general know-
 ledge of natural history. Insect repellent may be
 useful; wear waterproof footwear.

* * *

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE SOUTH MORESBY

British Columbia's South Moresby Island is unique. Its majestic forests and fertile shores shelter plants, birds, mammals and insects found nowhere else on earth. South Moresby is being logged.

To show the federal and provincial governments that Canadians care about South Moresby, the Save South Moresby Caravan is crossing Canada during March. The Caravan will stop in Ottawa on March 10th. Attend the meetings! Sign the petition! Buy the booster buttons! Ride the Caravan westward!

For last minute details on the Caravan and its Ottawa stop, call Gary Blundell at 235-0011 or the Canadian Nature Federation at 238-6154.

DEADLINE: Material intended for the May-August issue must be in the Editor's hands before March 1st at the latest.



Alfred Bog Painting to be Raffled

GET YOUR RAFFLE TICKETS

FOR

ALETA KARSTAD'S ORIGINAL OIL PAINTING

ALFRED BOG

Tickets for the painting, at \$2.00 each, will be available at Monthly Meetings and the Soirée.

The painting will be on display at Monthly Meetings and the Soirée.

The draw will take place at the Soirée on May 2nd. All proceeds will go to the Alfred Bog Fund.

Would you like to sell some raffle tickets to your friends and fellow workers? Then call Philip Martin (729-3218) or Lynda Maltby (997-2392).

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